**A Special Meeting of the Hawthorn Parish Council was held at 12 midday on Thursday 25th May in the Community Centre to discuss the current planning application re the Stapylton Arms.**

**MINUTES**

**Present**

Cllrs. George Vest (Acting Chairman)

Cllr. Peter Ellis, Diane Hughes, Norman Hughes, **Sheila** Irving, Maxine Smith

DCC Cllr. Angela Surtees

**Officers**

Lesley Swinbank (Parish Clerk)

Barry Gavillet (DCC Planning Officer)

Sarah Eldridge (DCC Conservation Area Officer)

**Residents**

John Hughes, Carolyn Winter, Eileen and Bill Adamson, Arthur Ridley,M.Creighton, Nick Partridge, Anne Ogden, Dawn Porter, Andy Dorward, Catherine Gilfoyle, Fiona Pearson, Paul Paterson, David Irwing,

David Ford, Jane Sawyers, Mike Sawyers, Ken Stephenson, Stephen Marley, Sharon Marley, A. Robinson, D. Robinson, Victoria Heckels, K..Trainer, M.Trainer,, K.Rowe, P.Rowe, K. Robinson

# Apologies:

Cllr. Alan Askew

# Declarations of Interest

None

# Opening remarks / procedure for the meeting : Cllr. George Vest ( Chairman)

The Chairman, Cllr, George Vest welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mr. Barry Gavillet (Senior Planning Officer), Sarah Eldridge (DCC Conservation Area Officer) and DCC Cllr. Angela Surtees.

He said the meeting had been called as a result of the overwhelming support from local residents to retain the Stapylton Arms as a pub for the village and community. He explained that there is a deadline for comments to be made to DCC and this is Friday June 2nd and thanked Mr Gavillet and Ms Eldridge for agreeing to come along.

It was confirmed that notices of the meeting had been placed on the noticeboards and via the electronic newsletter.

He explained the procedure for the meeting and explained that the public would be able to give their views and comments during the Public Participation item on the agenda. The parish council would then discuss the application, taking into account the views already expressed and agree the council’s response.

# The application itself : information : Mr Barry Gavillet (Planning Officer DCC)

The Chairman introduced Mr Barry Gavillet and Ms Sarah Eldridge who then proceeded to give details of the application re the change of use of the Stapylton Arms from a pub to a dwelling and demolition of the outbuildings.

The following points were made:-

1. The deadline for the application to be called in has now lapsed and this will now be a delegated decision.
2. The application will be determined primarily against Policy 96 and I particular:-
3. The facility is no longer financially viable or
4. There is no significant demand for the facility within that locality; or
5. Equivalent facilities in terms of their nature and accessibility are available or would be made available nearby.
6. It is essential that all residents write in to DCC with their own objections and comments and as much evidence as possible to back up the points as above.
7. The deadline for these comments is Friday 2nd June

# Public Participation

The Chairman closed the meeting whilst all residents were invited to give their views and comments.

*(These have been summarized in accordance with the main points as identified by Mr. Gavillet. And Ms. Eldridge)*

## The facility is no longer financially viable

This was strongly disputed.

### A number of residents confirmed that the Stapylton Arms has been a very valuable community asset over many, many years and one which has attracted customers from not only the local community and its hinterland but has held much wider appeal to people living in Easington, Seaham, Murton and beyond. It has been a focal point of this small rural village and provided good food and drink for residents and tourists alike.

### Residents agreed that the argument that the Stapylton Arms is a business which has not been profitable in the recent past is solely the owner’s decision to either sell or convert it into a residence and who has subsequently engineered the downturn in trade.

Examples include:-

### Sporadic opening times

### Being closed when it was expected a pub should be open i.e. Saturday evenings, Sunday lunchtimes and during those times when community events are being held such as the switch on of the Christmas lights. (In previous years the pub has been ‘crowded out’ at this time.)

### There is also much first hand evidence that the pub staff have been rebuked for trying to attract customers

### Marketing of the Stapylton Arms on the open market has not been sufficiently vigorous and it is suggested that if this is undertaken properly then it would in all likelihood attract a new owner who wishes to run the pub as it has been up until recent times and which would result in a successful and thriving pub once again.

## There is no significant demand for the facility within that locality;

**This was strongly challenged.**

### Residents felt that the Stapylton Arms not only provides local employment, but is also an important community asset where people meet and socialise. A number of individual residents expressed their own personal interest in providing such a facility and several

### expressed interest in establishing a community action group to look at the purchase of the pub if necessary.

## Equivalent facilities in terms of their nature and accessibility are available or would be made available nearby. ‘

Again this was strongly disputed.

### It was agreed that the nearest similar facilities is the Pemberton Arms

### This is not close enough for the more elderly residents of the village.

### The footpaths to the Pemebrton Arms is uneven and are now unlit

The Chairman thanked everyone for the views and comments and re-opened the meeting.

# Planning Application : To agree the response from the Parish Council to the application.

Members discussed the application in detail.

**RESOLVED**

1. **To oppose the application on the following grounds that the application does not meet the criteria as laid down in Policy 96 as above.**
2. **The Clerk to draw up the letter of objection and circulate to all members for general approval before forwarding to DCC**

(This was unanimous)

# Community Group

Concerns had been expressed during Public Participation re publicizing this council meeting and the need to encourage residents to personally write into DCC with their own individual objections. It had been suggested that the council co-ordinate, in the first instance, a new community group to look into the viability of running the pub as a viable business.

**RESOLVED**

1. The Parish Clerk to produce a letter / leaflet for circulation to all residents encouraging residents to write in their own objections to DCC – and by June 2nd.
2. DCC Cllr Angela Surtees agreed she would have these copied and returned to the Chairman by Friday night
3. Volunteers from the meeting agreed to meet at 10am on Saturday morning and deliver the leaflets and also start off the process for establishing a formal community group to begin the process of looking at the viability of buying and running the Stapylton Arms if and when this becomes necessary in order to retain the pub as a community asset and business for the people of Hawthorn.

The `Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 1.50pm